The Builder.

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THE employment of coloured decorations increases, promises indeed to be general, and should lead our young artisans and others to become draughtsmen and designers, and so availing themselves of the demand, improve their condition. In the private exercise of our profession we have, at this time, decorations going on in three or four places; and it is a constant source of annoyance to us, almost pain, to find that English workmen cannot be obtained for this purpose—at least so say the masters, who, moreover, profess themselves anxious to obtain English assistants, and vexed at being obliged to send to Germany or France, for what they ought to be able to find in London without difficulty. At the little works to which we have referred, and at any similar undertaking now going on in England, a visitor would fancy himself in a foreign *atelier*,—moustaches, rolling hair, and jaunty smoking caps, distinguishing the occupants.*

Let it not be supposed, however, that we are so illiberal and so short-sighted, as to object to the employment of any but our own countrymen, or to desire that foreigners should keep at home. Quite the reverse. An examination of the industrial and artistical progress of England shews, too plainly, how much advantage has resulted to this country from pursuing a contrary course, to allow us to fall into this error, even if our opinions were less liberal than they are. What we did (on another occasion) object to, was the repeated employment of a foreigner as director, by corporations and authorities on the ground of superiority, to the prejudice of Englishmen equally or more competent; and what we do now grieve at is, that our operatives should still remain so wofully behind-hand in matters of art as they are, to their own great loss and the discredit of the country.

Art, which ought to be the affair of all, has not received proper attention in England, still less encouragement. Much has been done within these last five years, and our prospects are brightening, but very much remains to be done, and demands strong efforts on the part of Government and those who properly appreciate the importance of the question.

One great aim should be to make the study of drawing general; it can be acquired as writing is, by the meanest capacity,—that is, mere drawing,—and we would have it taught in every "national school," and every other educational institution throughout the kingdom, as one of the indispensable rudiments.

That it should be neglected as it is, even by the superior classes, is quite extraordinary,—it is positively the neglect of a faculty.

By not acquiring a knowledge of drawing, we give up a means of conveying impressions, and explaining intentions, in addition to reading and writing, and of universal application. Instead of regarding a knowledge of it as an accomplishment, the want of it ought to be considered a disgrace; and we hope the time is not far distant when this will be the case.

A love of art should be encouraged amongst our operatives by every possible means. In France, art is cheaper, and goes lower than it does here; and therein lies the secret of the superiority of their workmen in departments requiring the exercise of it. Our galleries, collections of works of art, museums, and ancient buildings, should be opened freely to all; and by the contemplation of works of beauty, the general standard of taste would be raised, and a power of discrimination gained.

It is much to be desired, too, that government should issue, at a cheap rate, some good works on ornamental and decorative art; the want of such at moderate cost is greatly felt. Such a step would seem to fall within the province of the educational committee of Privy Council; it could not fail to be productive of much good, and would be considered a boon by a large number of persons.

There is no want of talent for art in this country, but there is astounding ignorance: what we need is, the removal of the latter, and the means of efficiently developing power. The establishment of schools of design was a great step, and cannot fail to produce good results; less or more so, of course, according to the manner in which the institutions are conducted. But what we wish to do is, to make *every* school a drawing-school, and to accustom every one, gentle and simple, to the use of the black lead pencil.

At present, the established decorators say, little assistance is to be obtained from the central School of Design. Still we have had occasion to mention favourably the names of some who have proceeded from that establishment, and much as alteration seems wanting there, are willing to be patient and give time.

In the Queen's Pavilion, the Opera House, Buckingham Palace staircase, &c., some of the pupils were employed, and acquitted themselves well. Another very considerable work of this class will be commenced at the end of the year. As much as four or five thousand pounds will be spent, we believe, in decorating Covent-garden theatre, and it is to be hoped that opportunities will be afforded for the employ of English artists, and that these in their turn will find English artistical operatives to carry out their designs.

There has been much to prevent the progress of ornamental art: the duty on glass, only recently removed; the duty on bricks, still continued, discouraging the attempt to produce ornamental forms; the employment of *cast-work*;—the dis-esteem in which decorative artists have been unjustly and unwisely held; have all aided in depressing it. A demand for it, however, is now arising, and it will be our own faults if we have to go abroad for the supply.

The elaborate engravings in our present number illustrate an example of ornamental carved work in France, of the Renaissance period.

BLACKBURN EXCHANGE COMPETITION.—The following is the order in which Mr. Cockerell placed the ten designs selected as the best. The substance of the arbitrator's report we have already given:—No. 1, Messrs. Brunkspear and Dixon, Manchester (50*l.*); 2. Messrs. Banks and Clarkson, London (20*l.*); 3. Mr. Wilson, Bath (10*l.*); 4. Messrs. Mee and Webb; 5. Mr. Young; 6. Mr. Blair; 7. Messrs. Starkey and Duffey; 8. Mr. Stephen Salter; 9. Mr. Fish Taylor; 10. Mr. W. Orford.

* Among the decorations most recently visited by us, are those of a hall, staircase, and suite of rooms for Mr. Fergusson, in Langham-place, by Messrs. Coltman and Davis. These are all carried out in flat colours, approaching mosaic work, and, though of course less expensive than where copies of natural objects and shadows are introduced, are very satisfactory. Mr. E. T. Parris has some extensive works in progress. Mr. Agbio is engaged upon a drawing-room at Earl's-court, to which we shall refer when finished.

ANNOTATIONS ON IRON.*

LIGHTNING CONDUCTORS.

THE disposition of iron externally, at least in high and exposed situations, should be judiciously considered, in reference to its attraction for lightning; frequent instances have occurred of explosions taking place in the summits of spires, from the finial and upper courses being bound together by an iron bolt, and there being no superior conductor to avert their destruction. Where there is no conductor, but a series of conducting bodies, with intervals of masonry between, much mischief may be expected from explosions at the interruptions. Iron rods have been much used for lightning conductors, and are still so employed; but they are fast giving place to copper tubing, which has a great superiority, for two reasons: firstly, copper has five times the conducting power of iron, and secondly, tubing presents nearly double the surface of a solid rod for the passage of the fluid—perforations being made at the summit, and at intervals downwards, to admit of its descent inside as well as out. Copper is also better than iron from its less destructibility by rust or fusion: wire ropes have long been used in some parts of Germany in preference to rods—no doubt from the greater quantity of surface they afford. When holdfasts of iron are employed, they should be of cast-iron, as being the most durable, and be painted, and wrapped in old silk dipped in melted tallow, which, being non-conductors, serve the purpose of insulating the rod; or the neck of a bottle introduced would more effectually serve the same purpose. But although iron holdfasts are generally used, their liability to expand and be operated upon by the changes of the weather, are disadvantages which lead to a preference being given to several other substances. A block of glass, or of Valentia slate, with a projecting eye, and let into the masonry with cement, being both of them non-conductors, are respectively recommended. Eyes of oak driven into the joints are also used. The manner in which the wires of the electric telegraph are insulated in their points of support, as lately executed about York, is worthy of note, as bearing on this subject.† Small castings of the same material as stone spirit bottles, barrel shaped, open through from end to end, and with a small semi-circular channeling round the middle outside, are placed horizontally against the side of the posts, and there secured with metal staples, girding them by means of the channeling aforesaid. In these hollow barrel-like castings the conductor rests, loose, and perfectly insular. Provision should be made to allow of the expansion and contraction of the conductor, which, where tubing is used, is advantageously accomplished by soldering or otherwise securing a piece of smaller tube an inch lower in the lower length, and letting it stand, say five inches, in the upper, so that the latter can rise or fall on it, according to the influence of the weather; this should be done over the holdfasts, in which the conductor should rest, by means of a band or ring of larger tubing soldered round it outside.

It is stated that a lightning conductor protects an area around it whose radius is double the height from the ground to the point; it is also agreed, that not only do conductors protect from lightning the buildings on which they are fixed, but by silently and imperceptibly drawing off the electricity from the clouds, they mitigate the violence of thunder-storms, and thus extend the benefit of their influence to the neighbourhood. The conductor should be attached to the highest part of a building, and project a few feet above it; it should be carried down in as straight a line as possible, without any interruption to its continuity, and terminate in a furcated form below the foundation, in a deep trough or depression in one of the drains, where it will at all seasons be in contact with water; or in a deep pit in the subsoil, and surrounded with the graphite from gas retorts, which, besides being indestructible, is an active conductor, and therefore well calculated to facilitate the dispersion of the fluid into the earth. Where there are several similar pinnacles or a tower, a conductor on

* See p. 459, ante.

† These wires are inked iron, about one-fourth of an inch thick—the sinking being about one-fifteenth of an inch: the conducting power of zinc being to that of iron as 5 to 3, it thus serves the double purpose of protecting the iron against decay, and affording a more perfect vehicle to the electric current.

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